

— Safety management in food industry SMEs —

Ensuring food safety is vitally important but problematic in the densely populated Asia-Pacific region because most food producers and processors are SMEs. SMEs are constrained by limited resources and a lack of expertise concerning food safety standards and management systems. To support food industry SMEs in addressing such problems, the APO organized a training course on ISO22000, 9–13 July in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in collaboration with the Korea Productivity Center.

Food moves from farms to consumers via supply chains composed of multiple actors. Since safety hazards can enter the food chain at any stage from farm to fork, adequate control under ISO22000, a generic food safety management standard, is essential. ISO22000 integrates the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) application steps developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. It defines general food safety requirements that should apply to all organizations regardless of size and anywhere in the supply chain regardless of the process involved. Therefore, combined efforts of all parties throughout the food chain is required. ISO22000 provides the framework for a harmonized food safety standard that is accepted worldwide.

“The training was basically on food safety management. The importance of ISO22000 and its benefits compared to the current certification is very critical for any food company. Three resource speakers of equally high caliber tried their best to teach us through their presentations as well as practical experiences,” said Nutan Sudhir Kale, Technical and Quality Assurance Manager of Chordia Food Products Ltd, an Indian SME exporting food products to the UK, USA, and Dubai. For hands-on training the participants simulated two case studies, one on plant layout and work flow, and the other an audit scenario.

The participants also made site visits to two local companies: Ottogi Corporation, a leading “instant food” corporation in Korea famous for noodles; and Sahmyook Food Ltd., an ISO22000-certified SME producing soy drinks, baby formula, vegetable proteins, and other soy and tea products. “The visit to an ISO-certified manufacturing plant was very useful and interesting. It gave the participants practical insight on what the physical and operational conditions of being an ISO22000-certified plant should be in the Korean setting for benchmarking,” said Amor Gracia Diaz, Head of the HACCP-based Fish Inspection Unit, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippines. 